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CHEAP REPOSITORY.

SUNDAY READING.

ON

CARRYING RELIGION

INTO THE

Common Business of Life.

DIALOGUE between JAMES STOCK and WILL
SIMPSON, the Shoemakers, as they sat at Work.



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A DIALOGUE, &c.

JAMES STOCK and his journeyman Will Simpson, as I informed my Readers in the Second Part of the Two Shoemakers, had resolved to work together one hour every evening in order to pay for Tommy Williams's schooling. This circumstance brought them to be a good deal together when the rest of the men were gone home. Now it happened that Mr. Stock had a mighty way of endeavouring to turn all common events to some use; and he thought it right on the present occasion to make the only return in his power to Will Simpson for his great kindness. "For," said he, "if Will gives up so much of his time to help me to provide for this poor boy, it is the least I can do to try to turn part of that time to the purpose of promoting Will's spiritual good." Now as the bent of Stock's own mind was religious, it was easy to him to lead their talk to something profitable. He always took especial care however, that the subject should be introduced properly, cheerfully, and without constraint. As

well knew that great good may be sometimes done by a prudent attention in seizing proper opportunities, so he knew that the cause of piety had been sometimes hurt by forcing serious subjects where there was clearly no disposition to receive them. He said he had found out that two things were necessary to the promoting of Religion among his friends; a warm zeal to be always on the watch for occasions, and a cool judgment to distinguish which was the right time and place to make use of them. To know *how* to do good is a great matter, but to know *when* to do it is no small one.

Simpson was an honest good-natured fellow; he was now become sober, and rather religiously disposed. But he was ignorant, he did not know much of the grounds of Religion, or of the corruption of his own nature; he was regular at Church, but was first drawn thither rather by his skill in psalm-singing than by any great devotion. He had left off going to the Greyhound, and often read the Bible or some other good book on the Sunday evening. This he thought was quite enough; he thought the Bible was the prettiest history book in the world, and that Religion was a very good thing for Sundays. But he did not much understand what business people had with it on working days. He had left off drinking because it had brought Williams to the grave, and his wife to dirt and rags; but not because he himself had seen the evil of sin. He now considered swearing and Sabbath breaking as scandalous and indecent, but he had not found out that both were to be left off because they are highly offensive to God, and grieve his Holy Spirit. As Simpson was less self-conceited

than most ignorant people are, Stock had always a good hope that when he should come to be better acquainted with the word of God, and with the evil of his own heart, he would become one day a good Christian. The great hindrance was that he fancied himself so already.

One evening Simpson had been calling to Stock's mind how disorderly the house and shop, where they were now sitting quietly at work, had formerly been, and he went on thus:

Will. How comfortably we live now master to what we used to do in Williams's time! I used then never to be happy but when we were keeping it up all night, but now I am as merry as the day is long. I find I am twice as happy since I am grown good and sober.

Stock. I am glad you are happy, Will, and I rejoice that you are sober; but I would not have you take too much pride in your own goodness for fear it should become a sin, almost as great as some of those you have left off. Besides, I would not have you make quite so sure that you *are* good.

Will. Not good master! why don't you find me regular and orderly at work?

Stock. Very much so, and accordingly I have great respect for you.

Will. I pay every one his own, seldom miss Church, have not been drunk since Williams died, have handsome cloaths for Sundays, and save a trifle every week.

Stock. Very true. And to all this you may add that you very generously work an hour, for poor Tommy's education, every evening without fee or reward.

Will. Well master, what can a man do more

If all this is not being good, I don't know what

Stock. All these things are very right as far as they go, and you could not well be a Christian without doing them. But I shall make you stare perhaps when I tell you, you may do all these things and many more, and yet be no Christian.

Will. No Christian! surely master I do hope that after all I have done, you will not be so unkind as to say I am no Christian?

Stock. God forbid that I should say so Will. I hope better things of you. But come now, what do you think it is to be a Christian.

Will. What! why to be christened when one is a child, to learn the Catechism when one can read, to be confirmed when one is a youth, and to go to Church when one is a man.

Stock. These are all very proper things, and quite necessary. They make a part of a Christian's life. But for all that, a man may be exact in them all, and yet not be a Christian.

Will. Not be a Christian! ha! ha! ha! you are very comical master.

Stock. No indeed, I am very serious, Will. At this rate it would be a very easy thing to be a Christian, and every man who went through certain forms would be a good man; and one man who observed these forms would be as good as another. Whereas, if we come to examine ourselves by the word of God, I am afraid there are but few comparatively whom our Saviour would allow to be true Christians. What is your notion of a Christian's practice?

Will. Why, he must not rob nor murder, nor

get drunk. He must avoid scandalous things, and do as other decent orderly people do.

Stock. It is easy enough to be what the world calls a Christian, but not to be what the Bible calls so.

Will. Why, master, we working men are not expected to be saints, and martyrs, and apostles, and ministers.

Stock. We are not. And yet Will, there are not two sorts of Christianity; we are called to practise the same Religion which they practised, and something of the same spirit is expected in us which we reverence in them. It was not saints and martyrs only to whom our Saviour said that they must "crucify the world with it's affections and lusts." We are called to "be holy" in our measure and degree, "as he who hath called us is holy." It was not only saints and martyrs who were told that they must be "like-minded with Christ"—That "they must do all to the glory of God"—That they must renounce the spirit of the world, and deny themselves." It was not to apostles only that Christ said "they must have their conversation in Heaven." It was not to a few holy men set apart for the altar that he said "they must set their affections on things above"—That they "must not be conformed to the world."—"No," he said to Fishermen, to Publicans, to Farmers, to Day labourers, to poor Tradesmen that he spoke when he told them they must love not the world nor things of the world—"That they must renounce the hidden things of dishonesty, grow in grace, and lay up for themselves treasures in Heaven."

Will. All this might be very proper for them to be taught, because they had not been bred

Christians, but Heathens or Jews: and Christ wanted to make them his followers, that is, Christians. But thank God we do not want to be taught all this, for we *are* Christians, born in a Christian country, of Christian parents.

Stock. I suppose then you fancy that Christianity comes to people in a Christian country by nature?

Will. I think it comes by a good education or good example. When a fellow who has got any sense sees a man cut off in his prime by drinking, think he will begin to leave it off. When he sees another man respected, like you master, for honesty and sobriety, and going to Church, why he will grow honest and sober and go to Church; that is, he will see it is his advantage to be a Christian.

Stock. Will, What you say is the truth, but is not the whole truth. You are right as far as you go, but you do not go far enough. The worldly advantages of piety, are as you suppose, in general, great. Credit, prosperity, and health, almost naturally attend on a religious life, both because a religious life supposes a sober and industrious life; and because a man who lives in a course of piety puts himself in the way of God's blessing. But a true Christian has a still higher aim in view, and will follow Religion even under circumstances, when it may hurt his credit and ruin his prosperity, if it should ever happen to be the will of God that he should be brought into such a declining state.

Will. Well, master, to speak the truth, if I go to Church on Sundays, and follow my work in the week, I must say I think that is being good.

Stock. I agree with you, that he who does both

gives the best outward signs that he is good. But our going to Church, and even reading the Bible are no proofs that we are as good as we need be, but rather that we do both these in order to make us better than we are. We do both on Sunday, as means by God's blessing to make us better all the week. We are to bring the fruits of that Chapter or of that Sermon into our daily life, and try to get our inmost heart and secret thoughts, as well as our daily conduct, amended by them.

Will. Why, sure master, you won't be so unreasonable as to want a body to be religious always. I can't do that, neither. I'm not such a hypocrite as to pretend to it.

Stock. Yes, you can in every action of your life.

Will. What master, always to be thinking about Religion?

Stock. No, far from it Will; much less to be always talking about it. But you must be always acting under it's power and spirit.

Will. But surely 'tis pretty well if I do this when I go to Church, or while I am saying my prayers. Even you master, as strict as you are, would not have me always on my knees, nor always at Church I suppose: for then how would your work be carried on, and how would our town be supplied with shoes?

Stock. Very true, Will. 'Twould be no proof of our Religion to let our customers go barefoot; but 'twould be a proof of our laziness, and we should starve as we ought to do. The business of the world must not only be carried on, but carried on with spirit and activity. We have the same authority for not being "slothful in business" as we have for being fervent in spirit." Religion has

ut Godliness and laziness as wide asunder as any two things in the world; and what God has separated, let no man pretend to join. Indeed, the spirit of religion can have no fellowship with sloth, indolence, and self-indulgence. But still, a Christian does not carry on his common trade quite like another man neither. For something of the spirit which he labours to attain at Church, he carries with him into his worldly concerns. While there are some who set up for Sunday Christians, who have no notion that they are bound to be Week-day Christians too.

Will. Why, master, I do think, if God Almighty were contented with one day in seven, he won't thank you for throwing him the other six into the bargain. I thought he gave us them for our own use; and I am sure nobody works harder all the week than you do.

Stack. God, it is true, sets apart one day in seven for actual rest from labour, and for more immediate devotion to his service. But shew me that text, wherein he says, thou shalt love the Lord thy God on *Sundays*—Thou shalt keep my commandments on the *Sabbath Day*—To be carnally minded on *Sundays*, is death—Cease to do evil, and learn to do well *one day in seven*—Grow in grace on the *Lord's Day*—Is there any such text?

Will. No, to be sure there is not; for that would be encouraging sin in all the other days.

Stack. Yes, just as you do when you make Religion a thing for the Church and not for the world. There is no one lawful calling in pursuing which we may not serve God acceptably. You and I may serve him while we are stitching this pair of Boots. Farmer Furrow, while he is plowing yonder field.

Betsy West, over the way, whilst she is nursing her sick mother. Neighbour Ingle, in measuring out his tapes and ribbons. I say, all these may serve God just as acceptably in those employments as at Church. I had almost said more so.

Will. Aye, indeed—how can that be? Now you're too much on t'other side.

Stock. Because a man's trials in trade being often greater, they give him fresh means of glorifying God, and proving the sincerity of his religion. A man, who mixes in business, is naturally brought into continual temptations and difficulties. These will lead him, if he be a good man, to look more to God, than he perhaps would otherwise do. He sees temptations on the right hand and on the left; he knows that there are snares all around him, this makes him watchful; he feels that the enemy within is too ready to betray him, this makes him humble himself; while a sense of his own difficulties makes him tender to the failings of others.

Will. Then you would make one believe, after all, that trade and business must be sinful in itself, since it brings a man into all these snares and scrapes.

Stock. No, no, *Will*; trade and business don't create evil passions—they were in the heart before.—Only now and then they seem to lie snug a little—our concerns with the world bring them out into action a little more, and thus shew both others and ourselves what we really are. But then, as the world offers more trials on the one hand, so on the other it holds out more duties. If we are called to battle oftener, we have more opportunities of victory. Every temptation resisted, is an enemy subdued; and he that ruleth his own spirit, is better than he that taketh a city.

Will. I don't quite understand you, master.

Stock. I will try to explain myself. There is no passion more called out by the transactions of trade than covetousness. Now, 'tis impossible to withstand such a master sin as that, without carrying a good deal of the spirit of religion into one's trade.

Will. Well, I own I don't yet see how I am to be religious when I'm hard at work, or busy settling an account. I can't do two things at once; 'tis as if I were to pretend to make a shoe and cut out a foot at the same moment.

Stock. I tell you both must subsist together. Nay, the one must be the motive to the other. God commands us to be industrious, and if we love him, the desire of pleasing him should be the main spring of our industry.

Will. I don't see how I can always be thinking about pleasing God.

Stock. Suppose, now, a man had a wife and children whom he loved, and wished to serve, would not he be often thinking about them while he was at work? and though he would not be *always* thinking about them, yet would not the very love he bore them be a constant spur to his industry? He would always be pursuing the same course from the same motive, though his words and even his thoughts must often be taken up in the common transactions of life.

Will. Well, I say first one, then the other; now for labour, now for religion.

Stock. I will shew that both must go together. I will suppose you were going to buy so many skins of our carrier—that is quite a worldly transaction—you can't see what a spirit of religion has to do with buying a few calves' skins. Now, I tell you

it has a great deal to do with it. Covetousness, a desire to make a good bargain, may rise up in your heart. Selfishness, a spirit of monopoly, a wish to get all, in order to distress others; these are evil desires, and must be subdued. Some opportunities of unfair gain offers, in which there may be much sin, and yet little scandal. Here a Christian will stop short; he will recollect, that "he who maketh haste to be rich shall hardly be innocent." Perhaps the sin may be on the side of your dealer—he may want to overreach *you*—this is provoking—you are tempted to violent anger, perhaps to swear—Here is a fresh demand on you for a spirit of patience and moderation, as there was before for a spirit of justice and self-denial. If, by God's grace, you get the victory over these temptations, you are the better man for having been called out to them. Always provided, that the temptation be not of your own seeking. If you give way, and sink under these temptations, don't go and say that trade and business have made you covetous, passionate, and profane. No, no; depend upon it, you were so before; you would have had all these evil seeds lurking in your heart, if you had been loitering about at home and doing nothing, with the additional sin of idleness into the bargain. When you are busy, the devil often tempts you; when you are idle, you tempt the devil. If business and the world call these evil tempers into action, business and the world call that Religion into action, too which teaches us to resist them. And in this you see the Week-day fruit of the Sunday's piety. 'Tis trade and business in the Week which call us to put our Sunday readings, praying, and Church-going into practice.

Will. Well, Master, you have a comical way, some how, of coming over one. I never should have thought there would have been any religion wanted in buying and selling a few calves' skins. But, I begin to see there is a good deal in what you say.—And, whenever I am doing a common action, I will try to remember that it must be done after a Godly sort.

Stock. I hear the clock strike nine—let us leave off our work. I will only observe farther, that one good end of our bringing Religion into our business is, to put us in mind not to undertake more business than we can carry on consistently with our Religion. I shall never commend that man's diligence, though it is often commended by the world, who is not diligent about the salvation of his soul. We are as much forbidden to be overcharged with the cares of life as with it's pleasures. I only wish to prove to you, that a discreet Christian may be wise for both worlds; that he may employ his hands without entangling his soul, and labour for the meat that perisheth without neglecting that which endureth unto eternal life; that he may be prudent for time, while he is wise for eternity. Z.

(44)

THE HYMN.

I.

O THAT the Lord wou'd guide my ways,
To keep his statutes still!

O that my God would give me grace
To know and do his will!

II.

Lord, send thy spirit down to write
Thy love upon my heart,
Nor let my tongue indulge deceit,
Nor act a liar's part.

III.

From vanity, Lord, turn mine eyes,
Let no corrupt design,
No covetous desires arise
Within this soul of mine.

IV.

Order my footsteps by thy word,
And make my heart sincere;
Let sin have no dominion, Lord,
But keep my conscience clear.

V.

My soul hath gone too far astray,
My feet too often slip;
I wou'd not, Lord, forget thy way,
Bring back thy wand'ring sheep.

VI.

Make me to walk in thy commands,
'Tis a delightful road;
Nor let my head, or heart, or hands,
Offend against my God.

THE END.



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